ABSTRACT

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS IMPACTING THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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This study examined teachers' perceptions of factors impacting the academic success of alternative school students in an alternative school in Georgia. The study's dependent variable was teachers' perceptions of alternative school students and the independent variables were as follows: social skills, academic capacity, behavior and self-concept, parental involvement and school structure. Survey questions were developed based upon these variables.

The study utilized a survey design. Teachers responded to a 23 item survey. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four alternative school teachers.

Findings from the surveys indicated that the majority of all participants' responses were *disagree* and alternative school students do not respect others or teachers. The misbehavior of alternative school students may also lead to academic and social difficulties in various classroom settings. Additionally, many participants were unsure if alternative school students were successful in the areas of utilizing higher level thinking skills; drawing conclusions from their experiences in class; students ask higher order thinking skills questions in class; students can relate concepts taught in one lesson to concepts taught in other lessons; and students can relate concepts taught in one subject area to different subject areas. The majority of participants were not sure if a transition process was in place for alternative school students returning to the traditional school settings. Lastly, the majority of participants indicated that the transition process was an ineffective process for alternative school students returning to the traditional school settings.

Findings from the interviews revealed that alternative school teachers believed that alternative school students were more successful in the alternative school setting than the traditional school settings. The positive relationships formed with alternative school students assisted alternative school teachers in helping these students succeed behaviorally, academically and socially.

The study's key findings support the need for transition services for alternative school students entering and exiting the alternative school and the need for alternative school students to establish positive relationships with the staff members and teachers that will be a part of their academic and social lives.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of the factors impacting the academic success of alternative school students.

Background of the Problem

The term alternative school is a popular educational term that has been a part of the educational framework for several decades. The first alternative schools emerged as idealistic havens for students who had "turned off" and "tuned out" (McGee, 2001). These schools encouraged creativity and focused on individuality and personal freedom. It was often acceptable by the staff and students to disengage from being a part of the "establishment" (McGee, 2001). McGee stated the following:

> These early 'alternatives' often allied themselves with the concept of progressive education, subscribing to the belief that education should focus on the whole child and should be heavily experiential in nature. The staffs of these schools encouraged students to 'look within,' to express themselves openly, and to participate in determining the focus and nature of the education they were to receive. Building on these concepts, early alternative schools often incorporated the phrase 'Free School' or 'Open

> School' into their names. Many of these original alternative schools continue to exist today. (p. 588)

By 1981, 80% of the nation's larger school districts (those enrolling 25,000 students or more) had alternative schools (Franklin, 1992; Ascher, 1982). Furthermore, one out of every five districts enrolling less than 600 students had one or more alternative schools (Franklin, 1992).

The options for alternative schools also varied. Reilly and Reilly (1983) unveiled three types of alternative schools: (a) nonpublic (examples: parochial and military schools); (b) upper socioeconomic preparatory schools for wealthy and college-bound students; and (c) compensatory schools that served students who did not function well in traditional schools (examples: behavior-disordered students and potential dropouts). This research focuses upon alternative schools that are aligned with Reilly and Reilly's (1983) third definition of (compensatory schools) which were designed to keep problem youth in school (Collins, 1987). In 1992, Franklin stated:

> For this reason, alternative schools have become socio-educational intervention programs for at-risk youths and in many ways share similar rehabilitative purposes as social programs for these youths. Alternative schools are similar to social programs in that they not only focus on the education of at-risk youths, but also attempt to increase the youths' social functioning and behavior competencies. (p. 239)

Subsequently, Raywid (1994) surmised that alternative schools have had two enduring consistencies from the beginning of inception: (a) They have been designed to respond to

a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program; and (b) They have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments.

For decades, students who have not been able to succeed in the traditional school setting have been placed in alternative school settings. Not only must alternative school students adjust to the alternative school setting, but many of these students may also be plagued with academic, social, familial, and legal problems (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

By 1981, 80% of the schools in the United States, (those enrolling 25,000 students or more) had alternative schools (Franklin, 1992; Ascher, 1982). Alternative school settings differ in their organizational structure and design when compared to the traditional school (Franklin, 1992; Trickett, 1985). The organizational and structural differences between the traditional school setting and the alternative school setting may be the catalyst that many alternative school students need in order to achieve and maintain success (Franklin, 1992). Alternative schools tend to be small with a strong focus on themes, choices, standards, rules and counseling for students. Successful alternative school programs may also be given autonomy to facilitate an academic and social educational program that differs from that of the traditional school setting (Franklin, 1992; Trickett 1985).

Three Major Types of Alternative Schools

Raywid (1994) identified three major types of alternative schools:

Type I Alternative Schools: "Type I alternative schools virtually always reflect organizational and administrative departures from the traditional, as well as programmatic innovations" (p. 27). Type I schools may resemble magnet schools and they are schools of choice and highly popular.

Type II Alternative Schools: Raywid (1994) coined these particular schools as *Last-Chance Programs.* Raywid explained that these alternative programs to which students are *sentenced* are usually the last chance students have to succeed prior to being expelled from school. Raywid stated, "They include in-school suspension programs, cool-out rooms, and longer term placements for the chronically disruptive. They have been likened to "*soft-jails,*" and they have nothing to do with options or choice" (p. 27). Raywid suggested that the major goal of the Type II Alternative School is behavior modification, and little attention is paid to modify the curriculum or pedagogy. Students may be required to complete work that they would have received in the regular classroom setting, or the focus is on the *basics*, emphasizing rote, skills and drill.

Raywid (1994) explained that the analysis of a 1979-1980 study (Office of Planning and Budgeting, 1981) of the Type II Alternative Schools yielded few benefits for those sentenced to them and the programs made minimal improvements in the number of students who received referrals; received expulsion or who dropped out.

Type III Alternative Schools: Raywid (1994) indicated that these particular alternative schools are for students who are in need of remediation or rehabilitation in

academic and or social/emotional areas. The assumption is that after successful treatment, students can return to mainstream programs. Therefore, Type III alternatives often focus on remedial work and on stimulating social and emotional growth-often through emphasizing the school itself as a community (Foley & Crull, 1984; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernadez, 1989).

Alternative schools are usually identifiable as one of these three types. However, alternative school programs can be comprised of a mixture of the three types of programs. Further, both Type II and Type III Alternative Schools set out to fix the student on the assumption that the problems lie within the individual. Type I alternative schools assume that the difficulties may be a school-student match and that by altering the school's program and environment, one can alter students' response, performance, and achievement (Raywid, 1994).

Student behaviors, attendance and credits earned often improved in the supportive environments of the Type III Alternative Schools (Gold & Mann, 1984). However, such programs are costly due to the low student to teacher ratio; and the gains are often temporary (Raywid, 1994). When students return to their regular schools, the emblems of disruptive behavior, truancy, or a lack of effort recur (Frazer & Baenen, 1988; McCann & Landi, 1986). The typical conclusion is that the program has failed to change the students. Rarely is it concluded that the environment makes the difference and is what enables these students to succeed (Raywid, 1994, p. 28).

According to Raywid (1994), the Type I Alternative School is quite different from the Type III Alternative School. They are less costly than Type III programs because

they often operate with the same student-adult ratio as other local schools, and their success is more pronounced and longer lasting.

Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately, the road back to the traditional school may not be a straight path for many alternative school students. Many alternative school students engage in a "revolving door" cycle or syndrome. Stone (2003) recommended the need to study the transition process of students exiting the alternative school and entering the regular school setting. Stone also studied whether alternative school students understood the need for transition services from the alternative school to the traditional school. This study explores some of the issues raised by Stone (2003). More specifically, it seeks to examine the impact of teachers' perceptions on the academic success of alternative school students in relation to social skills; academic capacity; behavior and self-concept; parental involvement; and alternative school structure.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will (a) add to the limited body of literature regarding alternative school students and teachers' perceptions; (b) encourage administrators and teachers to examine their perceptions of alternative school students; and (c) assist teachers and administrators in developing supportive transition services for alternative school students.

This researcher strongly believes that education is a right as opposed to a privilege in the United States. Unfortunately too many alternative school children are caught in the revolving doors of an educational system/building in which many of these

students never achieve academic or social success or gain permanent entry. These children are a part of the federal legislation, No Child Left Behind; yet this researcher believes that too many alternative students are being left behind or pushed aside academically and socially. When any student fails educationally, the long term implications for poverty becomes more of a reality for that student. The significance of alternative students being trapped in poverty after experiencing a cycle of academic and social failure is a bleak future that no student deserves. Unless schools become places of hope for alternative school students, these students may become hopeless and drop out of school. The alternative school may be the last chance for formal education for many alternative school students who are too young to attend adult education programs or who choose not to attend school at all.

A Contextual Exemplar

The following narrative was included by the researcher because the researcher believed that as a critical thinking change agent for children too many stories for alternative school children have never had a chance to be told. David's story deserves to be told. David's story must be told.

Once upon a time there was a student named David. David was sent to an alternative school for possession of a weapon on school grounds. David received the maximum punishment allowed by the school district's handbook: 135 days out of school expulsion and mandatory one calendar school year at the alternative school. David also faced felony weapons charges in court as well.

When David arrived at the alternative school he fit right into the current student body. He was male, age 14, Hispanic, previous and current gang involvement and he hated anyone in authority especially women. David was being raised by his aunt. His mother was currently in a rehabilitation program in another state. All parents and or family members tell the teachers and administration the same story about the students who come to the alternative school: "He was a good boy and he's real smart too. He just got caught up in the wrong crowd. But I tried to teach him right from wrong. I did my best."

David was very quiet the first few days. During "the honeymoon stage," David was trying to figure out where he could fit in or if he could fit in. Of course, students are excellent at identifying which affiliations a student is associated with by a raised eyebrow.

As David became acclimated to the alternative school environment, he began to transform from that rebellious student that had a huge disciplinary folder into a student that trusted and believed in us and more importantly believed in himself. Every day David and other students are treated with kindness, respect, authority and human touch. The alternative school teachers constantly study and discuss relevant literature and topics surrounding the alternative school students.

David's academic gains came much more easily than his social gains. David was receiving straight A's in all academic areas during his first semester at the alternative school. David was a peer tutor for many students and he was extremely kind and helpful towards all students. He never had any close friendships with any particular students.

David always stayed after-school for the tutoring program although he did not need the help. David stayed for the social interaction and the teachers always welcomed David into the group and activities. Based upon David's extraordinary progress, the teachers at the alternative school wrote letters on David's behalf to have David's felony charges reduced to misdemeanors. The judge was extremely compelled by David's academic and social progress that the charges were completely dropped.

David continued to receive excellent academic grades during the second semester at the alternative school. Halfway through the second semester, the teachers start preparing the students to transition back to the regular school setting. Teachers meet regularly to discuss students' academic and disciplinary progress. Teachers also know that some students may begin to act out in negative ways because they do not want to go back to the regular school setting. Students may begin to skip school; get into fights; curse out teachers; in an effort to stay at the alternative school. For many students, the alternative school is the only place where these students have ever been successful. Many alternative students experience an extreme amount of fear and anxiety thinking about going back to a school or a place where they were not successful academically or socially.

David apparently told his aunt that he was going to do something bad in order to stay at the alternative school. David's aunt told him not to do anything to risk getting into trouble. Unfortunately David did not listen to his aunt's advice. David waited until the last week of school and he brought another weapon to school. David was caught with a razor blade in class. He was cleaning his nails with it. David told the teacher that he

did not want to go back to the regular school setting because they weren't going to treat him like we treat him at the alternative school.

At David's tribunal, he received 90 days expulsion, counseling for he and his aunt and a mandatory calendar school year at the alternative school. What could the regular middle school and the alternative school teachers and administrators have done to have saved this rising star student from repeating the same grade and repeating a cycle of expulsion and mistrust?

Many alternative school students will successfully complete the alternative school program. Then they will return to the larger home school setting, only to experience more academic and or social failure. Subsequently, the regular education teachers and administrators will attempt to place the former alternative school students back into the alternative school setting. This is the cycle of success and failure that many alternative school teachers witness for many alternative school students.

Research Questions

RQ1: Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact do the social skills of alternative school students have upon their academic success?

RQ2: Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does the academic capacity of alternative school students have upon their academic success?

RQ3: Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does behavior and self-concept have upon the academic success of alternative school students?

RQ4: Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does parental involvement have upon the academic success of alternative school students?

RQ5: Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does alternative school structure have upon the academic success of alternative school students?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organization of Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to examine relevant, empirical literature that is related to this study's major dependent variable (teachers' perceptions of the academic success of alternative school students) and the study's independent variables.

The alternative school that was chosen for this particular study would be classified as a Type III alternative school based upon the description provided by Raywid (1994). Students are admitted into the alternative school based upon disciplinary action (tribunal hearing) or an admissions committee hearing. One of the major goals of the alternative school program is to keep teacher to student ratios as low as possible. Secondly, the alternative school staff works very closely with community organizations to help meet the academic and social needs of these students. The teachers have weekly contact with each parent of each student at the alternative school and low teacher to student ratio allows teachers to provide small group instruction and individualized attention to students.

The alternative school that was the focus of this the study accepts students through disciplinary tribunals and admissions screening from the regular middle school and the high school. According to the Georgia Department of Education (2001), *Code IDDM,* this particular type of alternative school is described as a Cross Roads Alternative

Education Program. This type of alternative education program provides for the educational and behavioral needs of students who have been adjudicated; removed from the regular school program due to disruptive or violent behavior; or are returning from placement in a Department of Juvenile Justice facility.

Once students are accepted and registered into the alternative school program, the alternative school teachers must help students adjust to life as alternative school students. First, teachers must assess what each student's academic and social needs are and immediately put academic and social plans into place to help the student to achieve success. The student may be immediately enrolled in after school tutoring. The student's parents and or probation officer are contacted daily or weekly regarding academic and social progress.

According to the Georgia Department of Education (2001), the mission of alternative programs is as follows:

1. Enable students to perform at grade level.
2. A local school system may provide an alternative education program jointly with one or more school systems.
3. The alternative education program may be located on or off a regular school campus, and may provide for a student's transfer to a different campus, a school-community guidance center, or a community-based alternative education program.
4. Upon the request of a local school system, a regional educational service agency may provide information on developing an alternative education

program that takes into consideration the system's size, wealth, and existing facilities in determining the program best suited to the system.

5. If a student placed in an alternative education program enrolls in another local system before the expiration of the period of placement, the local board of education requiring the placement shall provide to the local school system in which the student enrolls, at the same time other records of the student are provided, a copy of the placement order. The local school system in which the student enrolls may continue the alternative education program placement under the terms of the order or may allow the student to attend classes without completing the period of placement, unless otherwise required by federal and state law.
6. A local school system may provide an In-School Suspension Program, a Cross Roads Alternative Education Program, a School-Community Guidance Center, a Community-based Alternative Education Program, and/or any other alternative education program model that otherwise meets the requirements of this rule.
7. Each local school system shall provide an alternative education program to serve students in grades 6-12 (K-5 students may be served but shall not be counted for funding purposes that:
    - Separates disruptive students from non-disruptive students who are assigned to the program.
    - Provides for students' educational and behavioral needs.

- Includes the objectives of the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC).
- Provides instruction that will enable students to return to a general career education program as quickly as possible.
- Focuses on English, language arts, math, science, social studies, and self-discipline.
- Provides supervision and counseling to enable students to make academic progress toward grade level while attending such a program.
- May be staffed by a paraprofessional for an In-School Suspension Program only, as long as the maximum class size for Alternative Education Programs is not exceeded. (Georgia Department of Education, Official Code of Georgia Annotated Law 160-4-8-12)

The Status of Alternative School Students in American Schools

According to a statistical analysis study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2001a) entitled *Public Alternative Schools and Programs for Students at Risk of Educational Failure 2000-2001*, as of October 1, 2000, over 612,900 students or 1.3% of all public school students (approximately 47,000,000 public school students in the U.S.) were enrolled in public alternative schools or programs for at-risk students. The National Center for Education Statistics defined at-risk as involving the risk of education indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors that may have led to temporary or permanent withdrawal from the traditional school setting. Furthermore, NCES defined alternative schools as separate facilities that were designed for alternative programs and alternative education students

deemed to be at-risk for failure in the regular school setting. Alternative schools designed for gifted and talented students, private schools, regional schools and magnet schools were excluded from this study. The 2001 *District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs*, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics through its Fast Survey Response System was the first national study of public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of educational failure to provide data on topics related to the availability of public alternative schools and programs, enrollment, staffing, and services for these students (NCES, 2001b).

Over 1,500 school districts participated in this particular study and The Statistical Analysis Report indicated that more urban districts (school districts with more than 10,000 students) were more likely to have alternative education schools and programs for at-risk students than those with less than 10,000 students (NCES, 2001b).

Research has indicated that more minority students and poor students are referred to alternative schools and these particular groups of students have higher levels of high school drop out rates than white students (NCES, 2004).

The National Center for Education Statistics Report (2004) revealed that school districts involved in the survey with a low poverty concentration (10 percent or less with students at or below the poverty level), were less likely than those with moderate percentages (11% to 20% of students in poverty) or high poverty (more than 20% of students in poverty) to have alternative services for at-risk students. The NCES (2001b) report indicated that school districts that had less than 5% of minority students were less likely to have alternative programs for at-risk students than those school districts with

minority populations of 6% to 20% (moderate percentage of minority students) and 21% to 50% (high percentage) of minority students).

Although one of the major goals of many alternative schools is to return students to the traditional school setting, the National Center for Education Statistics Report (2001b) found student enrollment in U.S. public alternative schools extremely transient. Students are often returned to the traditional school setting if they were found to be "less" at risk for committing such violations as truancy, disruptive behavior, poor grades and other factors that led to temporary or permanent removal from the traditional school setting. Data from the NCES (2001b) report concluded that the major factors that determined whether alternative school students returned to the traditional education setting were (a) improved attitude, (b) behavior, and (c) student motivation to return to the traditional school setting.

The NCES (2001b) report indicated that students at risk of educational failure to transfer back to traditional schools or successfully complete an alternative high school graduate program depended largely on the quality of the education and services that they received in the alternative school setting and the traditional school setting. Many alternative school students have difficulty readjusting to the traditional school setting environment.

The NCES Statistical Analysis Report (2001b) indicated that alternative school students found success in alternative schools due to the following factors: small class size; well-defined program rules and standards; distinctive organizational school structure and design; dedicated and well-trained teachers and staff members; emphasis on themes

and character-building for alternative school students; effective curriculum designed for alternative education students; strong leadership provided by the administrative staff; significant teacher input regarding programs and instruction for alternative students; a variety of support services that work collaboratively with the alternative education staff and students; many choices for students; and autonomy from various rules and regulations that are a part of the structure of the regular school program (Franklin, 1992; Trickett, 1985).

Many alternative school students face a host of familial and societal problems. Some alternative students may have been involved in gangs or gang-related behavior and violent behavior. Many of these students have witnessed violence or have been victims of violence. Sexual abuse and self-esteem issues are problems that also plague alternative school students.

Zero Tolerance

Alternative schools continued to gain more notoriety during the late 1980s and early 1990s due to federal and state legislation entitled *Zero Tolerance*. According to Skiba and Knesting (2001), *Zero Tolerance* received national attention as the title of a program developed in 1986 by Peter Nunez, the U.S. Attorney in San Diego, to impound seagoing vessels carrying any amount of drugs. Skiba and Knesting explained that U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese highlighted the program as the national model in 1988. Meese ordered customs officials to seize the vehicles and property of anyone crossing the border with illegal drugs and charge those individuals with federal crimes. Thus, Skiba and Knesting (2001) suggested the following:

> ...The language of *zero tolerance* seemed to fire the public's imagination; within months, the term and strategy began to be applied to a broad range of issues, from environmental pollution and trespassing to skateboarding, homelessness, and boom boxes.
>
> Frightened by a seemingly overwhelming tide of violence, educators in the early 1990s were eager for a no-nonsense response to drugs, gangs, and weapons. Beginning in 1989, school districts in California, New York, and Kentucky picked up on the term *zero tolerance* and mandated expulsion for drugs, fighting, and gang-related activity. By 1993, zero-tolerance policies had been adopted across the country, often broadened to include not only drugs and weapons but also smoking and school disruption. (p. 19)

The Gun Free Schools Act and the Alternative School Student

The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 was passed into law during the Clinton Administration. The national policy mandates a one-year calendar expulsion for possession of a firearm; referral of law-violating students to the criminal or juvenile justice system; and the provision that state law must authorize the chief administrative officer of each local school district to modify such expulsions on a case-by-case basis (Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Skiba and Knesting also reported that many state legislatures and local school districts have broadened the mandate of *Zero Tolerance* beyond the federal mandates of weapons, to include such offenses as drug and alcohol possession and use, fighting, threats and behaviors outside of the school. Any school that did not

comply with the gun-free schools provision of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act could risk having federal aid withheld from that school district (Portner, 1995).

Unique and Distinctive Features of Alternative School Programs

In spite of the fact that many alternative schools face an uphill, financial battle, and they are disproportionately overrepresented by minority students, many alternative schools have achieved success. Dan Losen and Johanna Wald of Harvard University's Civil Rights Project and Judith Browne, senior attorney at the Advancement Project, announced in their 2001 report entitled *Zero Tolerance: Unfair, with Little Recourse*, that black students comprise 17% of the U.S. students but make up 33% of out-of-school suspensions and 31% of expulsions.

Raywid (1994) reported that alternative schools can revolutionize an entire inner-city school district. Raywid cited District 4 in Spanish Harlem as a school district that was marked by failure, poverty and a significant minority population. Raywid and others reported impressive evidence demonstrated by the school district. The following is a list of distinctive features that heralded this school district to success:

1. They were small.
2. Both the program and organization were designed by those who were going to operate them.
3. They took their character, theme, or emphasis from the strengths and interests of the teachers who conceived them.

4. Their teachers all chose the program, with subsequent teachers selected with the input of present staff.
5. Their students and families chose the program.
6. A teacher-director administered each program.
7. Their small size denied them access to auxiliary and specialized staff, such as librarians and counselors.
8. All the early programs were used as mini-schools in buildings that were dominated by larger programs.
9. The superintendent sustained the autonomy and protected the integrity of the mini-schools.
10. All of the programs were relatively free from district interference, and the administration also buffered them from the demands of central school officials.
11. The continuity in leadership increased considerably (Domanico, 1989; Elmore, 1988; Fliegel, 1993; Harrington & Cookson, 1992; Kutner & Salganik, 1986; Raywid, 1990; Rogers & Chung, 1983).

Furthermore, three factors account for the success that was demonstrated by the school district. First, the schools generated and sustained the concept of community within each school. Next, the schools made learning engaging for every student (Wehlage, 1989). Last, the school district provided the structure and organization needed to sustain the first two factors.

Raywid (1994) stated, "...Membership is what makes students speak of alternative schools as caring places and liken their school to family. A national survey a decade ago found that alternative schools identify teacher-student interaction as their greatest departure from conventional schools" (p. 29).

Teachers' Perceptions of Alternative School Students' Success

The purpose of Schuller's (2004) study was to discover alternative school principals' perspectives on the educational change process and the variables that affect those perspectives. Narrative descriptions were developed from data colleted at the alternative schools, through elite interviews, observations, and document analysis. The results identified recurring patterns or themes. The findings that were presented using each of the four competencies were identified as transformational and contributed to the educational change process in the alternative schools. The overall findings of this study demonstrated that alternative school principals facilitate changes in their schools utilizing the aspects of transformational leadership identified by Bennis and Nanus (1997) as competencies of vision, communication, trust and self-development.

Miller (2004) conducted a case study that focused on building an understanding of events surrounding the restructuring of a public alternative school in the Midwest. He studied the historical conflict between teachers at an alternative school and the administrators of the larger school district. The administrators argued that the program did not meet the needs of students academically or vocationally. Miller indicated that the teachers questioned the motives of the district administrators to use the alternative school as a "safety-valve" to rid the school district of challenging students. Miller (2004)

suggested that a related hypothesis arguing that pressures toward making alternative programs serve as a "safety-valve" function may be endemic to these institutions.

Bagby (2004) conducted a study that examined the relationship between alternative school factors obtained from students' records and students' persistence to graduation. A secondary purpose of this study was to determine which, if any, variables could be used to predict graduation or non-completion (dropping out) for other students in the same school setting.

Bagby (2004) found that a significant relationship existed between persistence to graduation and student, school, and demographic variables. Bagby explained that the variables that provided the best grouping for predictions regarding graduation were: grade at enrollment, change in grade point average (GPA), percent absent last year attended, program enrolled last year, and age at graduation or dropping out. Further, the percent absent last year attended and age at graduation or dropping out variables were identified as providing the best grouping for predictions in the model.

Bagby's (2004) study suggested that students who enrolled in the 11^{th} or 12^{th} grade from another high school within the district and participated in a work-study program were more likely to graduate. Bagby also suggested that the alternative school continue to target students who were parents based on the current success rates. Bagby suggested that efforts must be made to discover unmet needs of students not living with parents, and essential information about the alternative high school and how it meets the needs of at-risk students should be presented annually to sending schools.

Social Skills and Alternative School Students

Zwarych (2004) studied students' teachers', and administrators' perspectives regarding student attachment in three secondary school environments that contained a wide variety of programs and serviced a diverse student body. The major question that Zwarych asked was, "What is student attachment to school, and does it exist to the same extent in different schools and school programs?"

Zwarych's (2004) findings suggested that each of the learning environments affected students' perceptions of their belongingness, friendships, and relationships with teachers, valuing of school, involvement in activities, and security.

Horning (2004) conducted a case study which determined how alternative middle school students perceived their school experience. The study took place at Leeds Alternative Middle School and included student observations during instructional periods. Horning found that based upon the students' answers in the surveys and interviews the alternative school students perceived their school experience in a positive manner and believed that their needs were being met. The students explained that the alternative school teachers were the main reason for their success at the alternative school.

Academic Capacity

Due to behavioral problems, low expectations of teachers, and social problems, alternative school students may be performing well below their current academic grade level. However, given the proper support and academic guidance, many alternative school students can perform and achieve well above their current at or above their current

academic grade level of performance. These students have the academic ability to achieve given the proper support and guidance.

The Stuart Foundations conducted case studies of ninth grade students in literacy from 1995-1997. Students were selected for the case studies based upon low standardized test scores, low performance on literacy tests and reading tests, and based upon their teachers' perceptions of the students' overall academic capacity. Some of the key findings that emerged from the study were:

- Students were offered very little instructional support in middle and high school in reading.
- Teachers often avoided reading since they believed students were unable to comprehend course materials, thus offering fewer and fewer opportunities for reading in school.
- While the case study students were clearly inexperienced readers, particularly of academic texts, they did have untapped literacy experience, knowledge as well as a strategic repertoire of problem-solving strategies.
- Students might display quite different proficiency in reading comprehension when reading aloud versus reading silently, and when working with different texts or on different literacy tasks.
- Most of these adolescents were relatively inexperienced with expository reading and learning, while demonstrating more experience

and expertise in reading narratives. (http://www.west.org/cs/sli/print/docs/sli/9csestudies.htm)

Insights drawn from these case studies led to the design of the Reading Apprenticeship instructional framework, as well as to professional development opportunities designed to shift teachers' perceptions of their students' resources and capabilities.

Behavior and Self Concept of Alternative School Students

Toyryla (2003) conducted a study to determine the factors that ensured success and/or graduation for students enrolled in continuation high schools. Additionally, Toyryla sought to identify the major supportive characteristics of the continuation high school experience. Toyryla indicated that the results of the study would be offered to the continuation high school within the state of California and would give each school the opportunity to review current practices for possible modification or enhancement to provide the best educational programs for continuation high school students.

Toyryla's (2003) major findings suggested the importance of a small school which fostered other important characteristics such as a positive and caring environment, personal attention for students, formation of trusting connections with adults, relationships among students and lack of conflict to make a calm campus, involvement in school, and acceptance of all students "as they are." Toyryla also explained that students assumed personal control and responsibility for success, specific programs kept students in school, and a school structure employing self-paced work that was independent of other students were also very important.

McArdle (2003) conducted a study to find ways to address alternative education programs and alternative education schools. McArdle explained that the research was designed to (a) define the term alternative, (b) determine the effectiveness of alternative education programs, and (c) identify indicators of causes that may be shared throughout the alternative education system.

The results of McArdle's (2003) study indicated that students who successfully completed the program were classified as "improved" in the area of grade point average, attendance, and discipline. McArdle determined that the particular alternative school program that was studied was successful and future degrees of success have yet to be determined.

Vermeiren, Bogaerts, Ruchkin, Deboutte, and Schwab-Stone (2004) conducted a study which investigated the relationship between subtypes of self-esteem/self-concept (familial, academic, social and personal security) and anti-social behavior in adolescents (violent and property offending). The researchers administered a self-reporting survey to 1,466 students aged 12 to 18. The results of the study indicated that both low family acceptance and low academic competence were found to predict property and violent offending, while high popularity was found mainly violent offending. Additionally, the researchers suggested that the subtypes of self-esteem/self-concept present differently in anti-social adolescents which may suggest clinical and scientific consequences and such differentiation should be considered for future research.

Harrington-Lueker (1995) presented information regarding a school district in Corpus Christi, Texas in which its main focus is behavior modification. Harrington-

Lueker (1995) stated, "As communities push for get-tough policies on school disciplines, schools will increasingly provide public education for the small percentage of students who might otherwise be expelled" (p. 18). According to Harrington-Lueker, students that attend this particular school, in the school district in Corpus Christi, Texas, are assigned to the school until they earn their way out through a three level behavioral improvement program. As students' behaviors improve, they earn privileges. In order to return to the home school, students must have worked their way through all three levels of the behavior modification program and have 90% attendance and they must be passing all subjects. Harrington-Lueker also noted the advice from members of the school system and they stressed the need for staff members to be trained in crisis management and the need to find and keep experienced teachers.

Parental Involvement and Alternative School Students

Price (2004) surmised that alternative school models should represent options for students characterized as disenfranchised and/or underachievers.

Price's (2004) case study, research, included observations, interviews, and a report of five alternative schools identified by the Mississippi Department of Education as operating exemplary Alternative School Education Programs. Eight areas identified as critical indicators necessary to operate an effective alternative school were (a) a clearly and focused school mission, (b) a safe and orderly environment, (c) program expectations, (d) alternative educational opportunities, (e) instructional design, (f) a monitoring and evaluation system, (g) support services, and (h) parental/community involvement. Price found that all schools met each indicator. Yet, the researcher did find

that the state's program design fell short of rendering sufficient and appropriate services to young people with opportunities to obtain an education. The state's program did offer an alternative school setting to children that would allow them to remain in school and not be deposited on the streets as a result of suspensions or expulsion from the regular school setting. Price recommended that the state must engage in a paradigm shift in order for its alternative school programs' design to better meet the needs of the public school system and the people that it serves. The paradigm shift must be in response to the current design of the alternative school education program and the current success of that program. Price indicated that the way the Alternative School Education Program is designed, goes a long way toward shaping the nature of its establishment and its prospects for success.

Alternative School Structure and Alternative School Student Success

Labyer (2004) investigated two alternative education academies designed to serve at-risk students from grades six through twelve. Both alternative academies were located in rural towns in the Southwestern part of Oklahoma. The programs were deemed successful in preventing students from dropping out of school. These programs had also been successful intervention programs. Labyer (2004) found that at-risk students came to the academies with negative labels from their homes and the regular school setting.

Pearson (2001) conducted an ethnographic study which examined the experiences and perceptions of young adolescent male alternative school students who were at-risk for delinquency. Pearson found that teachers and students resisted an imposed school

context intended upon minimizing negative behavior and instead described the school itself as both a contributor and deterrent of delinquency.

Heinrich (2004) studied the transformation of a school-within-school alternative program, and he found that alternative education program remains a viable response for engaging students who would otherwise be dropouts. Heinrich discovered significant and substantive contributions through expansion of the typology developed by Raywid (1994) as well as corroboration of effective leadership and managerial practices. Heinrich suggested subsequent research questions which involved replicating the study and contrasting alternative school types for differentiating student performance.

Summary

The empirical literature that was presented in this chapter focused on the dependent variable of this study (teachers' perceptions of the academic success of alternative school students) and the independent variables of this particular study: the social skills of alternative school students; alternative school students' academic capacity; behavior and self-concept of alternative school students; parental involvement of alternative school students; and the structure of the alternative school for alternative school students.

In reviewing the literature, Bagby (2004) found that a significant relationship existed between persistence to graduation and the students, school, and demographic variables. As Labyer (2004) explained these students may have negative labels from home and the regular school setting. However, Labyer, also conducted a study which

indicated that the alternative school programs were successful in preventing students from dropping out of school.

Additionally, Toyryla's (2003) findings suggested the importance of students forming positive relationships with caring and trusting adults within the school environment. These characteristics helped to foster academic, behavioral and the social success of alternative school students. Toyryla's findings were significant because the researcher of this study interviewed four alternative school teachers who also gave similar responses regarding the importance of alternative school students forming positive relationships with adults.

Lastly, Horning (2004) conducted a case study which examined the perceptions of alternative middle school students. The results of case study indicated that the alternative school students perceived that their positive school experience was due to the work of the alternative school teachers.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this particular study focuses on the dependent variable: teachers' perceptions of the academic success of alternative school students and how it may be related to the following independent variables: alternative school students' social skills; alternative school students' academic capacity; alternative school students' behavior and self-concept; parental involvement of alternative school students; and the structure of the alternative school. Definitions of the dependent and independent variables follow and the relationship between the variables is presented in Figure 1.

Definition of the Variables

Dependent Variable

Academic Success of alternative school students – Academic success of alternative school students is defined as students who achieve a grade of "D" or better in the core subject areas (language arts, reading, math, science, social studies, and physical education), and achieve at a level of two or three on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). The academic standards and grading policy is consistent from the alternative school to the traditional middle and high school.

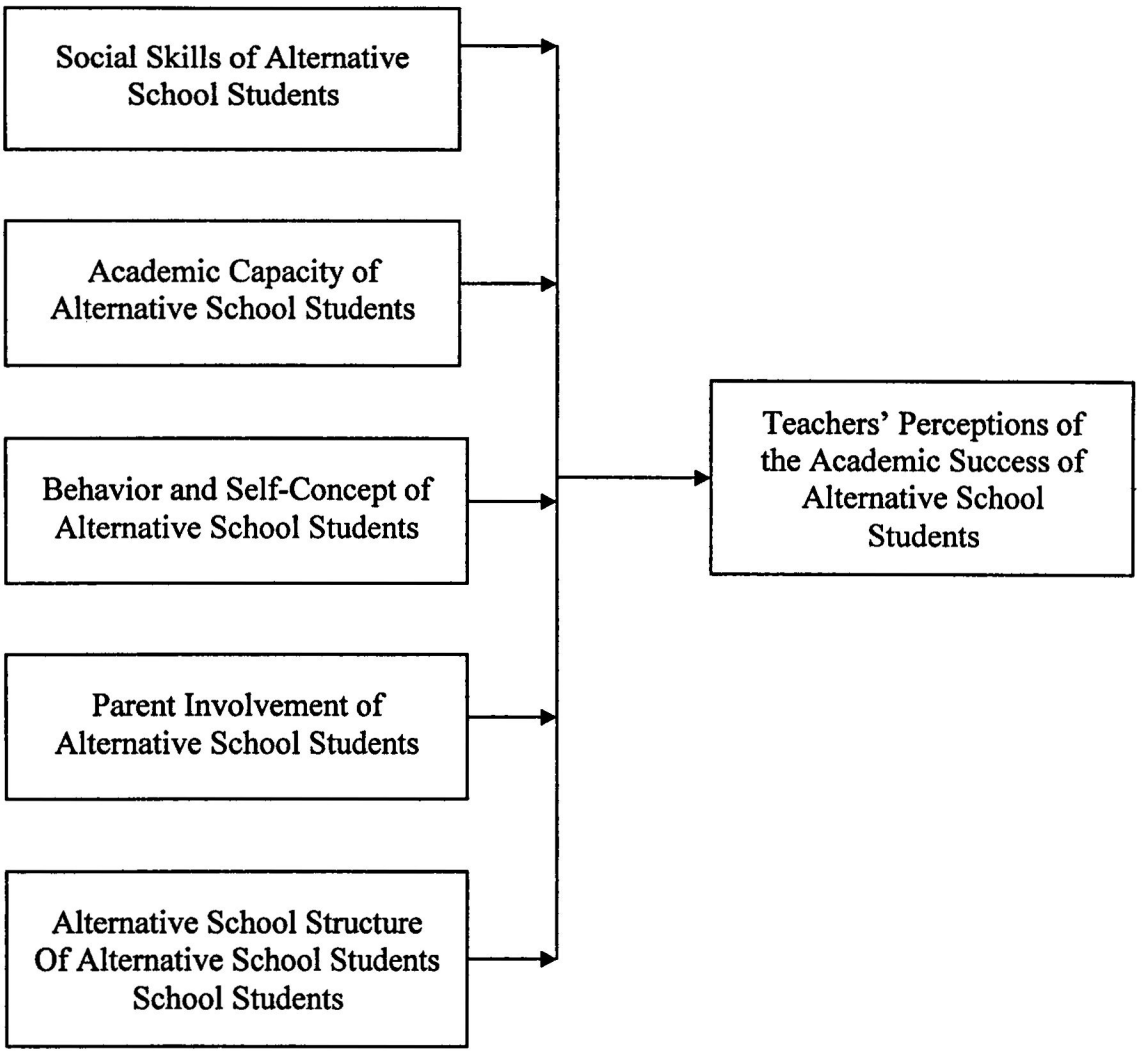

Figure 1: Relationship Among the Variables

Independent Variables

Social Skills - The ability of alternative school students to effectively interact with peers and adults in structure and unstructured activities within the alternative school setting and outside of the alternative school setting.

Academic Capacity – Academic Capacity encompasses the varying degrees in the academic performance levels of alternative school students. If alternative students displayed appropriate social behaviors; had a positive attitude, and had the proper support and guidance structure to maintain adequate academic and behavioral levels, alternative school students have the academic capacity to perform at grade level or above grade level. Due to behavioral problems, low expectations of teachers, and social problems, alternative school students may be performing well below their current academic grade level.

Alternative School Structure - A separate facility that is designated for alternative school students experiencing behavioral, academic and social problems. The official goal for the alternative school students is to eventually and successfully transition back to the traditional school setting (Raywid, 1994).

A number of other factors may contribute to the success of alternative schools such as small school size; well-trained teachers; strict adherence to rules and procedures; strong leadership; positive perceptions of alternative school students by teachers and adults at the alternative school; autonomy from some of the guidelines of the regular school; and the independent variables for this study (Raywid, 1994). These factors were

selected because the researcher identified these issues as prevalent and important in the alternative school that was being studied.

Other Related Terms

Discipline/Behavior Policies – Policies that are established by the school board of a school district, superintendent and individual staff members of a particular school. Federal and state educational laws govern these particular policies.

Social Skills Dysfunction – Students who have experienced difficulties in the community that may have required court or social service involvement, such as status offenses or delinquent behavior. Social skills dysfunction is one of the principal reasons students are referred to an alternative program (McCall, 2003, p. 113)

Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, the study focused on only four middle and high schools in which the teachers in this study were employed. These schools were either an alternative school, or a public middle school or high school where these students were referred to the Alternative School, which has an enrollment of 54 students. Second, out of a possible 248 teachers working full-time in these schools, only 46 participated in this study, which represents less than a 20% response rate.

Additionally, the survey was distributed during the spring semester of 2005 and the majority of sixth grade academy teachers and middle school teachers were preparing for the Criterion Referenced Competency Test and end of course testing. The researcher

gave the teachers seven days to complete the surveys. However, the test preparation may have hindered some teachers from participating in this survey.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

The study utilized a survey design. A 23 item survey was used to collect quantitative data regarding teachers' perceptions of alternative school students. The researcher chose to utilize the survey design format in order to gather data from subjects quickly and in an efficient manner. Additionally, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the alternative school teachers which yielded qualitative data.

Tuckman (1999) stated:

> Questionnaires and interviews help researchers to convert into data the information they receive directly from people (research subjects). By providing access to what is 'inside a person's head,' these approaches allow investigators to measure what someone knows (knowledge or information), what someone likes and dislikes (values and preferences), and what someone thinks (attitudes and beliefs). (p. 237)

Tuckman explained that this information or data can be transformed into quantitative data by using the attitude or rating scales or by counting the number of respondents who give a particular response, which generates frequency data.

Bogden and Biklen (2003) indicate that qualitative data collection methods such as interviewing and observation offer a perspective that cannot be captured quantitatively.

Further, the interviews provided a different and more nuanced view of the phenomenon under study.

Description of the Setting

The sample was purposefully selected. An alternative school located in Georgia that services middle and high school students was selected as the site to conduct the study. The alternative school has approximately 55 middle and high school students ranging in ages from 12-18. Students are accepted into the alternative school through admission screening or through disciplinary tribunal hearings. Some of the alternative students may be required to attend the alternative school for a short amount of time (one month) or for a much longer period of time, up to one school year. Figure 2 presents the organizational structure of the alternative school.

The alternative school has four teachers, one guidance counselor, and one campus police officer on staff. All of the alternative school teachers as well as the principal were asked to participate in this study. The researcher that conducted this study is the lead teacher at the alternative school and is a member of the alternative school staff at the alternative school. All participation for this study was voluntary.

Sample Population

Four out of five teachers at the alternative school completed the teacher survey. The principal of the alternative school also completed the teacher survey. Forty-two teachers from three traditional schools participated in the study. A total of four teachers from the alternative school completed the survey and participated in the interviews. The

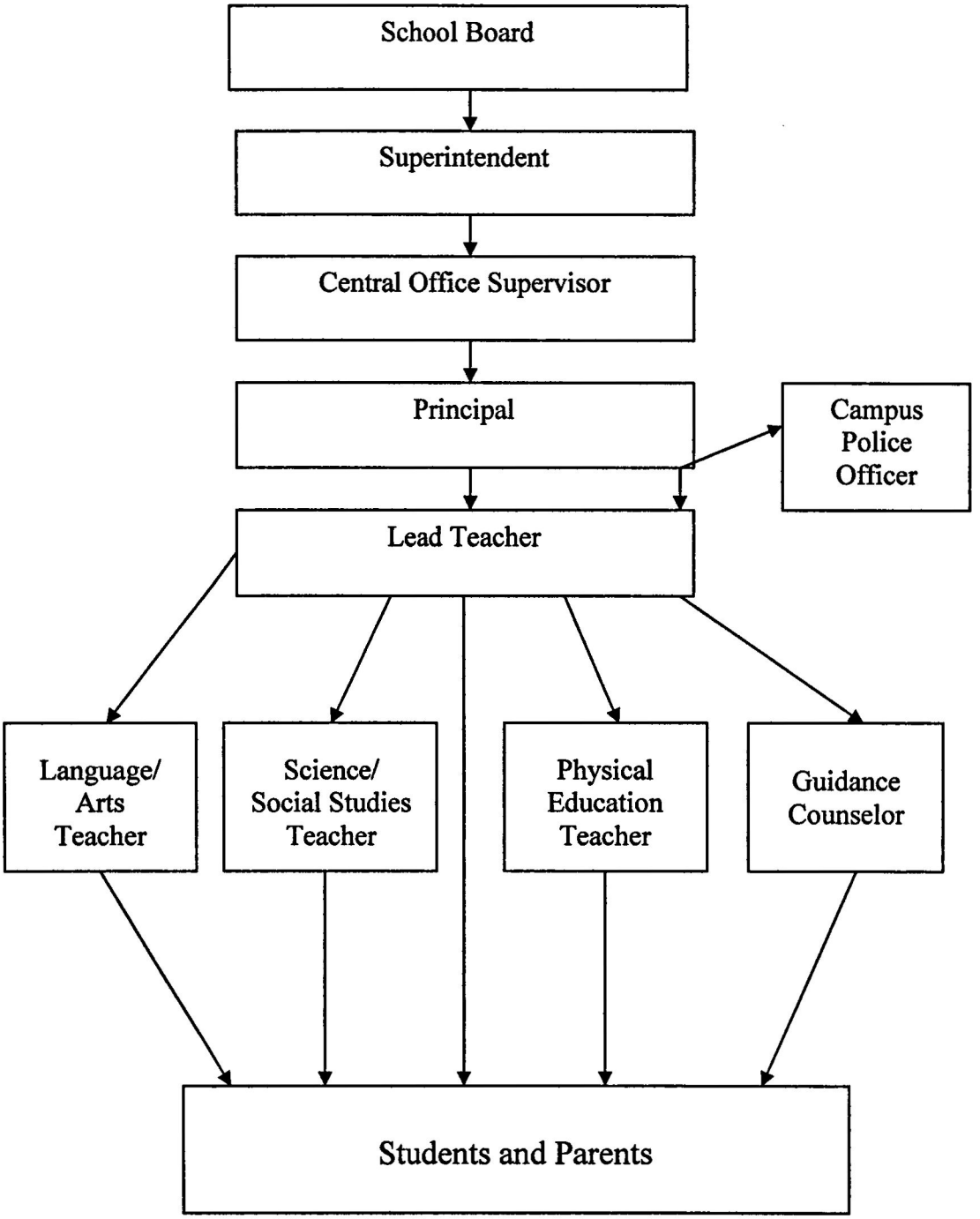

Figure 2. Organizational Structure of the Alternative School

total number of teacher surveys that was completed was 46. Table 1 illustrates the number of participants in the study.

Table 1

Teachers Participating in Study

	Alternative School	6th Grade Academy (Traditional School	Middle School (Traditional School)	High School (Traditional School) 9th and 10th Grade Teachers Only
Number of Teachers that Completed the Survey	4	16	3	23

Description of the Instrument

The survey consisted of 23 items. Respondents answered the items using a scaled response structure. Tuckman (1999) explained that in a structured scaled response the respondents express endorsements or rejections of an attitude statement or describe some aspect of themselves. Tuckman added that scaled responses lend themselves most readily to parametric statistical analysis, because they often can be considered interval data . . . Thus, the ultimate criterion in choosing a response mode is the nature of one's variables and one's intentions for statistically testing the hypotheses (p. 249). Tuckman also explained that if statistical tests for data analysis are not determined in advance; use the

scaled response mode because the interval data collected can always be transformed into ordinal or nominal data.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol consisting of eight open-ended questions was developed. Four out of five teachers participated in the interviews and the researcher allowed the participants to respond to the questions in any manner that they wanted to respond to each question. The researcher typed the responses after each interview was conducted and allowed each participant to review the responses to assure accuracy and validity of the responses provided by each participant. Lastly, no participant or school was identified in any way and no foreseeable harm came to any participant that participated in completing the interviews or surveys.

Administrative Procedures

The researcher completed the following steps in order to gain approval and access to the research site:

1. Submitted a proposal including detailed information (title of study; purpose of study; rationale of study; research questions or hypotheses; how study relates to district's research priorities; methodology; time line; participants; risk factors; and permission slips; data collection instruments).
2. Gained permission from alternative school principal, the traditional school principals (sixth grade academy, middle school and high school), and the superintendent's designee.

3. Once formal approval was granted, specific dates to disseminate and collect the surveys were scheduled with principal and teachers.

Data Collection

Data was collected in two phases over a one year period. The first phase consisted of the distribution of surveys to participants at the traditional schools and the alternative school. This process occurred during April and May of 2005.

The second phase consisted of four, 45-minute interviews with the alternative school teachers. The interviews of the alternative school teachers occurred during the month of February, 2006.

Statistical Applications

Each survey item was coded using a numerical system and data was entered into the 12.0 version of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The questions were given a number 1 through 23. Frequencies; percentages; valid percentages; and cumulative percentages were calculated for each survey question. Next, the survey questions were grouped into areas based upon the independent variables developed for this study. The data were analyzed.

The responses to the interview protocol were formulated into a matrix to identify major educational themes and patterns.

Validity and Reliability

The survey was designed according to academically accepted practices for protocol construction: variables were identified; items related to each variable were constructed; issues of readability and format were addressed (Tuckman, 1999).

The interview protocol was developed in response to the limits of the survey in captivating the scope of the issue under study.

Interviews

The interviews were compiled into abbreviated transcripts and the transcripts were reviewed by the participants to ensure their words and thoughts were accurate. This process known as member check is a method to ensure data validity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Critical Thinking Change Agents

This chapter presents key findings from the quantitative data and the qualitative data from the study. This chapter also includes conclusions, research implications, and policy and teaching recommendations regarding factors impacting the academic success of alternative school students.

Key Findings of Quantitative Data

1. Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact do the social skills of alternative school students have upon their academic success?

The majority of participants chose *disagree* in response to survey questions *1, 2, 3, and 18* for research question one. Teachers perceived that alternative school students were not successful in any of the following areas: Students participate in extra-curricular activities; Students respect teachers; Students respect each other; and Students don't have interaction problems with each other. Thus, when alternative school students lack social skills, their academic success may suffer as well.

2. Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does the academic capacity of alternative school students have upon their academic success?

The majority of participants selected *disagree or not sure* in response to survey questions *4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15.* Another key finding that emerged was alternative school students were not successful in respecting one another as suggested from the responses in Research Question One. Alternative students may also have difficulty utilizing higher level thinking skills in class. The data suggested that the behaviors of alternative school students must be appropriate in order for alternative school students to succeed academically.

3. Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does behavior and self-concept have upon the academic success of alternative school students?

Again, the majority of participants selected *disagree* in response to survey questions *5, 16, and 17.* One key finding that emerged was alternative school students are sent to the office for misbehavior. If alternative school students are spending a great deal of classroom time out of the classroom, due to misbehavior, then these students may definitely have difficulty achieving academic success due to the lack of *time on task* spent on various academic areas.

4. Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does parental involvement have upon the academic success of alternative school students?

The majority of participants chose *agree* which suggests that parents of alternative school students do care about the academic, social and behavioral success of alternative school students. However, parents may require help disciplining alternative school students. This assistance may come from the Juvenile Justice System, school

personnel, mentors and other family members who are interested in the academic, social and behavioral success of alternative school students.

5. Based upon teachers' perceptions, what impact does alternative school structure have upon the academic success of alternative school students?

Key findings that emerged from the data surrounding Research Question 5 suggested that the majority of teachers were not sure if a transition process was in place for alternative school students returning to the regular school. Secondly, participants indicated that the transition process was an ineffective process.

The overall scope of the data presented the alternative school students negatively as perceived by the teachers' survey answers from the study. Students were not successful in any area: social skills, academic capacity, behavior and self-concept, parental involvement or alternative school structure. However, when the researcher administered the alternative school teacher questionnaire to the alternative school teachers, they indicated that alternative school students were in fact, more successful at the alternative school than at the traditional school. Further, the alternative teachers also indicated that counseling services offered at the alternative school greatly assisted the alternative school students behaviorally and academically. Mandatory tutoring was another service offered at the alternative school that helped alternative school students achieve and maintain academic success.

Key Findings of Qualitative Data

The major finding that emerged from the alternative school teacher interviews was the fact that these particular teachers perceived that alternative school students were

more successful at the alternative school than the regular school setting. The alternative teachers believed that they had the opportunity to form strong, positive relationships with alternative school students which led to better behavior and better academic and social success. The alternative teachers indicated that support of the administration assisted them in helping the students to achieve success. Additionally, the teachers explained that they worked well together or *had each other's back* in this particular school environment. The alternative school teachers also noted that isolation was an effective behavior modification strategy that worked well with the alternative school student population. The alternative teachers also indicated that having a reward system; weekly parental contact; and recognition activities helped to promote a positive academic and social school environment for the alternative school students.

Conclusions

The alternative school teachers indicated in the interviews that small teacher-to-student ratios allowed them to establish stronger, more positive relationships with alternative school students. Secondly, the teachers indicated that isolation was an effective behavior modification strategy that worked well with the alternative school students. However, the alternative teachers overwhelmingly suggested that the positive bonds and relationships that they established with the students seemed to have more of an impact upon the students' academic and social success in school.

The majority of the teachers indicated that they were unsure if there was a transition process in place for alternative school students leaving one school and entering into another school. However, most teachers (traditional and alternative teachers)

indicated that the transition program was an ineffective process. Unfortunately, an ineffective transition process for the students may hinder the academic and social success of the alternative school students. The actions of adults in education and in schools positively or negatively impact the actions and success of all students. Students should smoothly and supportively transition from one school to another.

Research Implications

Two ultimate goals for all alternative school students are to successful transition back achieve academic and social success as well as successfully transition back into the traditional school setting. Trickett, McConahay, Phillips, and Ginter (1985) explained that many alternative schools must often fight for their right to exist and they are under constant scrutiny from district officials and community members.

Further, the researcher would like to administer a follow-up survey to the alternative school teachers and the regular school middle and high teachers regarding specific causal factors that lead alternative school students to be sent back to the alternative school setting.

The researcher would also like to examine the high school graduation rate of students who have attended the alternative school program. More importantly, the researcher would like to examine the referral rate of students of color (minority students) into the alternative school program versus non-minority students. The alternative school had four white students last year and no white students this year. Why is the referral rate of white students to the alternative school extremely low yet the referral rate of students

of color, specifically black males and Hispanic males to the alternative school extremely high?

Policy and Teaching Recommendations

The former alternative school students should have a behavior plan, academic plan and a counseling plan put into place prior to returning to the regular school setting. Although the word *tracking* may be an unpopular word in the *educational world,* some students need to be *tracked* or at least periodically contacted to see how the students are progressing at least for one academic school year. The alternative school teachers, parents and students should develop these plans together. Hopefully, these plans will help to alleviate alternative school students from repeating negative behaviors when they return to the home school. Students will have the opportunity to return knowing that they are a part of their own success plan.

The *tracking* plan or educational transitional plan (track the academic, behavioral and social success of former alternative school students) for alternative school students that includes components such as an academic component; behavior component; social component; extracurricular/creative component; and a mentoring component would be available tools for alternative school student success. The tracking plan would attempt to look beyond the alternative students' faults and build on the students' strengths. Hopefully, these students could be paired with positive peer and adult mentors once they returned to the home school. Alternative school students must have positive interaction with adults and peers every, single day in order to consistently view and model positive behaviors.

Additionally, the transition process for middle or high school alternative school students should begin in November or April of a school year. The researcher realizes that the alternative school students are not allowed on any other school campus but the alternative school year campus. However, the school district must move away from viewing the alternative school as a punitive type of placement and move to view this type of school as a rehabilitative type of school.

The study indicated the importance of the admissions process for alternative school students. Alternative school teachers should also serve as committee members during monthly admissions screening for alternative school students coming from the middle and high school. Alternative school teachers must be a part of the process. Alternative school teachers must be valued and have input regarding students entering the alternative school and how long these students will stay at the school.

The most important policy change or addition would be to review, revise and rewrite alternative school disciplinary handbooks. Administrators, alternative school teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, campus police officers, and anyone who has been trained has a tribunal officer should participate in this process and make suggestions and recommendations. Unfortunately, some alternative students have received tribunal sentences that exceed the legal limits. According to the disciplinary handbook a student could complete a year in the alternative school if he/she has committed murder, armed robbery or other serious felonies on or off campus or if he/she fails to improve academically, behaviorally or socially while attending the alternative school. The disciplinary handbook states that a child under most circumstances must

complete one academic semester at the alternative school. However, many tribunal officers are delivering much harsher punishments for variety of violations. Students should receive the consequences that *fit* the violations, not that make the administrators or teachers feel *vindicated.*

In conclusion, if educators are in the business of educating all children, then educators must look beyond race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, the housing projects that students come from, or certain schools within one's own school district. Lastly, "educators can be advocates for our profession and work together or detractors of our own profession" (Dr. Moses Norman). The alternative school and the home school must work collaboratively and strategically. Let *us* plan for our students so that our students can plan for their futures.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Questionnaire on Students Who Get Sent from Regular

to the Alternative School

Dear Teachers:

Please complete this questionnaire by selecting whether you agree or disagree to each item. The information is for research purposes only and you or your school or school system will not be identified in any way or form.

I appreciate your cooperation, as I am a student doing this research for a course requirement.

Thank you.

	Select one response for each item on students who get sent to Alternative School	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
1	Students participate in many activities (examples: sports, chorus, safety patrol, math club, drama club, pep squad)			
2	Students respect teachers			
3	Students respect other students			
4	Students are on task during instruction			
5	Students are rarely sent to the office for misbehavior			
6	Students don't have learning problems			
7	Students provide higher order ideas in class discussions			
8	Students express ideas about their life experiences in terms of higher order thinking skills			
9	Students analyze their life experiences in giving ideas			
10	Students draw conclusions from their experiences in class discussions			

Appendix A (continued)

	Select one response for each item on students who get sent to Alternative School	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
11	Students make comparisons between their experiences and those of others in giving ideas			
12	Students ask higher order thinking questions			
13	Students can relate concepts taught in one lesson to other lessons			
14	Students can relate concepts taught in one subject area to different subject areas			
15	Students perform above grade level			
16	Students attend very regularly (95% attendance)			
17	Students have moderate to high self concept			
18	Students don't have interaction problems with other students			
19	Students' parents show care and concern about discipline			
20	Students' parents help with discipline			
21	Students' parents attend Teacher Parent Conferences regularly or when called			
22	There is a transition process in place to prevent students returning to the alternative school			
23	The transition process for alternative school students returning to the regular school setting is an effective process			

APPENDIX B

Teacher Questionnaire on Students Completing Alternative School

Dear Teachers:

Please complete this questionnaire by selecting whether you agree or disagree to each item. The information is for research purposes only and you or your school or school system will not be identified in any way or form.

I appreciate your cooperation, as I am a student doing this research for a course requirement.

Thank you.

	Select one response for each item on students who complete Alternative School	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
1	Students participate in many activities (examples: sports, chorus, safety patrol, math club, drama club, pep squad)			
2	Students respect teachers			
3	Students respect other students			
4	Students are on task during instruction			
5	Students are rarely sent to the office for misbehavior			
6	Students don't have learning problems			
7	Students provide higher order ideas in class discussions			
8	Students express ideas about their life experiences in terms of higher order thinking skills			
9	Students analyze their life experiences in giving ideas			
10	Students draw conclusions from their experiences in class discussions			

Appendix B (continued)

	Select one response for each item on students who complete Alternative School	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
11	Students make comparisons between their experiences and those of others in giving ideas			
12	Students ask higher order thinking questions			
13	Students can relate concepts taught in one lesson to other lessons			
14	Students can relate concepts taught in one subject area to different subject areas			
15	Students perform above grade level			
16	Students attend very regularly (95% attendance)			
17	Students have moderate to high self concept			
18	Students don't have interaction problems with other students			
19	Students' parents show care and concern about discipline			
20	Students' parents help with discipline			
21	Students' parents attend Teacher Parent Conferences regularly or when called			
22	There is a transition process in place to prevent students returning to the alternative school			
23	The transition process for alternative school students returning to the regular school setting is an effective process			

Tear this part away from the survey and place in the packet marked gift Certificates

Participation is Voluntary!

Enter to win a $20.00 gift certificate to one of the following for completing this survey: Applebee's; Olive Garden; Red Lobster; The School Box; or Outback Steak House!

Please write your first and last name_____
Please write the school that you teach at_____
Please write the grade level(s) that you teach_____

The gift certificates will be delivered to your school and given to your principal after the surveys have been collected. Thank you again for your participation!

APPENDIX C

Alternative School Teacher Questionnaire

1. How long have you been a teacher at the alternative school and how many years have you been teaching privately and publicly? What subject areas do you teach?

2. Describe the services offered at the alternative school.

3. Describe the kinds of students that attend the alternative school (discuss: population, ethnicity, ages of students, academic problems, discipline problems, social problems, truancy problems, family problems, possible gang involvement of alternative school students, etcetera)

Appendix C (continued)

4. What strategies does the alternative school staff utilize in order to effectively deal with the following problems with alternative school students:

   Truancy problems:

   Discipline Problems:

   Academic Problems:

5. How do you think the alternative school differs from the regular school setting?

6. Do you think that more alternative school students achieve academic and social success at the alternative school or do they achieve more academic and social success when they transition back to the regular school setting? (Explain your answer)

Appendix C (continued)

7. What are the best thing and the most difficult aspects about teaching and working at the alternative school?

8. Is there a transition process in place for alternative school students to return to the regular school setting? Is it an effective transition process?

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